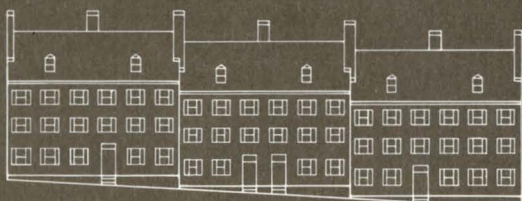


Changing Times: A Century and a Half at Lowell High School

An Exhibit by Jill Parker

PATRICK J. MOGAN
CULTURAL CENTER



Working People's Exhibit
September 18 - December 31, 1990
Tuesdays - Saturdays
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

40 French Street, Lowell, Massachusetts

"...people who graduated from Lowell High are uniquely qualified to change the city."

Marty Barrett, '87

Lowell High, the first co-ed public high school in the United States, opened in 1831 with 47 pupils. Its first home was a small building at Eliot and Middlesex Streets owned by the Hamilton Corporation. After moving into its Kirk Street location in 1840, the school expanded several times throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. In the mid-1970's, a bridge was built across the Merrimack Canal connecting the Kirk Street buildings with new classrooms and updated facilities on the other side.

One hundred and fifty years ago this fall, the first Lowell High School graduating class began its senior year. The class of 1841 produced a Massachusetts Governor and a Civil War General. Since then, Lowell High has turned out a number of notable personalities, among them memorable faculty, sports legends, and literary and entertainment stars. But while many Lowell High graduates have been recognized at local, state, and national levels, most are ordinary people who have been helped by their high school experience to live together in a rapidly changing society.



Living and Learning at Lowell High School

High school athletic contests have long been attended by the Lowell community. The Lowell-Lawrence Thanksgiving Day football game has drawn as many as ten thousand spectators. To this day, many Lowellians cannot sit down to Thanksgiving dinner until the big game is over.

Male sports teams have been a major part of the Lowell High story since the 1800's. Nineteenth century school newspapers carried vivid accounts of schoolboy victories and defeats on the football field, baseball diamond, and the track oval.

"One of the things I'll always remember about Lowell High School is being named MVP in soccer my junior year."

Erica Jutras, '90

Female students' participation in sports was generally limited to drill and calisthenics-type activities until the 1970's. At that time, Lowell High's young women began to demand sports programs equal to those provided for male students. By the end of the 1980's, girls' athletics had advanced considerably at Lowell High.

"Here will be found great opportunities for learning in preparation for desirable and useful careers...to help them develop to the greatest possible extent their inborn possibilities."

Supt. Vincent M. McCartin, 1933

Lowell High School is an institution dedicated to enhancing the intellectual development of its students in order that they are better prepared for their role as members of society. Its curriculum has been designed and redesigned over the past 150 years to respond to the changing times. Academic excellence has been facilitated and encouraged by the faculty and also by the local business community.

"...to see your name up there and to know that it will be around for years to come...I feel it is quite an achievement."

Carrie Regan, '89, Carney Medalist

The ultimate symbol of academic achievement at Lowell High School has been the much-coveted Carney medal. Each year, the top three male and top three female students of the graduating class are presented with this medal. The award was established in 1858 by James G. Carney, a successful businessman and graduate of Lowell High.

"... Lowell High School...an incredibly social place.."

Rodney Seaforth '87

Lowell High School has always offered opportunities outside the classroom for students to grow and realize their full potential. For many students, activities such as the school newspaper and the band provide an alternative to participation in athletics. Student clubs and extracurricular activities have changed as society's tastes and values have changed. In post-World War II times, Lowell High had

organizations such as the Marksmen's Club (a women's club), a returning Veteran's Club, and a Military Police organization, a youthful version of the U.S. Army MP's. During the 1980's newly-arrived immigrant groups, including Laotians, Vietnamese, and Cambodians, have formed organizations to provide assistance in relating to the broader high school community.



"...I can't imagine Lowell High without Girl Officers... I just can't imagine it."

Rachel Paquin, '59

Lowell High Cadet Officers and Girl Officers represented a long and proud tradition at Lowell High School. Membership in these organizations was often a multi-generational experience for many Lowell families.

The Cadet Officers were begun after the Civil War, when it was felt young men needed military instruction. Civil War General Benjamin Butler is believed to have had a major role in instituting the Cadet Officers training program at the high school. About a decade later, the Girl Officers' program was born. The Cadet and Girl Officers were largely responsible for organizing and leading the annual Field Day parade and Memorial Day activities.

As values changed, both the Cadet Officers and Girl Officers lost their appeal for Lowell High students. The Cadet Officers and Field Day ended in the mid-1970's and the Girl Officers ended in June 1990. In their place is the Junior Air Force ROTC, which began in 1977.

Changing Times at Lowell High

The people and events that shaped Lowell High School over the years reflected the broader forces impacting our city and our country. Rosters of

graduates mark the changing times and commemorate the shifting demographics of a city that have made it a gateway for new immigrant groups. One hundred and fifty years of yearbooks, newspaper clippings, and student memorabilia reflect ever-evolving social norms and youthful aspirations.

"... '68 was probably the last year when the rules were extremely strict...it was almost as if the roof came off the following year."

Kathy Kelley '68

Major regional, national, and world events have a great impact on students' opinions, values, and activities. Lowell High students respond to wars, national depressions, and downturns in the city's fortunes in ways that are in keeping with the perspective of youth. Young people are typically critical of what they consider their parents' and grandparents' mistakes and shortcomings. They often seem to waiver between an optimistic vision of improving their world and the pessimism that comes from feeling they are powerless to make their own decisions. Feelings of alienation or helplessness were especially evident in student writings of the post Vietnam War era. During the same time period, however, students united to march on City Hall in defense of a faculty member.

Since its opening, Lowell High has provided a setting for interactions between young men and women from all neighborhoods and all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Its history has not always been peaceful. Lowell High has gone through periods of ethnic strain and tension, particularly at times of economic stress or dramatic demographic change. The same successes and failures experienced by the Lowell community are felt on a smaller scale at the high school.

While this experience can be troubling at times, students come away with the skills to relate to a multi-ethnic society. The net result has been a community that, more often than not, has achieved a cohesion and a collective spirit. This bonding has made Lowell successful while many of its urban counterparts are experiencing difficulty.

Despite changing times and physical settings, one thing has remained constant at Lowell High - youth, with its hopes and fears, vitality and aspirations, and, above all, vision.

"...the students tell me in 1990, that they still eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches - the only difference is the price."

Rita Crowley, '31

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THE REVIEW

DECEMBER
1907



Any school or community groups wishing to tour this exhibit are requested to make reservations by calling 459-1000.

THE PATRICK J. MOGAN CULTURAL CENTER

The mission of the Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center is to "tell the human story found in the history of the United States as an industrial nation, especially by concentrating on the lives of the working people of Lowell, Massachusetts."

The Center, which opened in 1989, is named in honor of Lowell's former Superintendent of Schools who developed the concept of an urban park focused on Lowell's unique heritage.

This former boardinghouse which housed Boott Mill employees from about 1837 was rehabilitated by the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission, an agency of the U. S. Department of the Interior. It is an appropriate setting for the Lowell National Historical Park's interpretive exhibits on the theme of the Working People: Mill Girls, Immigrants, and Labor. The Center also houses the University of Lowell Center for Lowell History, and the University's Downtown Center for Continuing Education which offers year-round classes. A wide variety of cultural programs is also offered throughout the year at the Center.

UNIVERSITY OF LOWELL CENTER FOR THE ARTS

The University of Lowell Center for the Arts co-sponsors Temporary Exhibits at the Mogan Cultural Center through its Cooperative Agreement with the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission.

The mission of the Center for the Arts is to support and present the performing and visual arts for the University of Lowell campus and for the community of Greater Lowell. For information, call (508) 934-4444.

TEMPORARY EXHIBITS

Any organization, group, or individual interested in developing an exhibit at the Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center on its themes, should contact the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission at 222 Merrimack Street, Suite 310, Lowell, MA 01852, (508) 458-7653. A member of the Community Exhibits Committee will then contact you and, if approved, will recommend your proposal to the Mogan Community Advisory Board.